



# Echoes of the Call: Identity and Ideology among American Missionaries in Ecuador

*Jeffrey Swanson*

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**Echoes of the Call: Identity and Ideology among American Missionaries in Ecuador** Jeffrey Swanson Drawing on the personal histories of one hundred evangelical missionaries in Ecuador, *Echoes of the Call* explores the lives of missionaries as sociological "strangers." In a study as compelling as it is insightful, Jeffrey Swanson illustrates how missionaries are distanced, not only from their culture and homeland, but also from their own era.

The work begins with Swanson's interpretation of how his own experience as a child of missionaries shaped the viewpoint of estrangement from which the book is written. Swanson renders the formation of a missionary identity as the rhetorical composition of a personal testimony, in which life stories of separation, loss, conflict, and conversion are melded symbolically with historical mission themes of sacrifice, heroism, spiritual militancy, and divine calling. Relying on his subjects' own narratives, he traces the missionaries' personal journeys as their sense of calling first emerges, and then as it must be reinterpreted to account for unexpected, ambiguous, and often disillusioning experiences in their host country.

Swanson argues that missionaries are marginal individuals who use their vocation creatively to produce a meaningful social world, and who use rhetoric effectively to maintain that world, for themselves and for supporters in their home countries. An informative and nuanced study, this book is a significant contribution to present sociological literature concerning missionaries and American evangelicals. Anyone interested in the sociology of religion, culture, and folklore will find *Echoes of the Call* to be a valuable and intriguing work.

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